



**Norwalk River Watershed Association, Inc.**

New Canaan, Norwalk, Redding, Ridgefield, Weston, Wilton, CT; Lewisboro, NY

To: Connecticut State Assembly

On behalf of the Norwalk River Watershed Association, I am writing to testify against the conservation portion of the Governor's budget (H.B. No. 7027 AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE THIRTIETH 2019, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR) which would eliminate the council on Environmental Quality and cut funding to the DEEP and the Community Investment Act.

Given the freeze on EPA funding and the prospect of a hobbled EPA under the Trump administration, there has never been a more important time for state support of environmental protections, including independent reporting on science and the environment. The federal government is pulling down its science pages and silencing staff at the Environmental Protection Agency.

In Connecticut, the entity that can be counted on to report to the public, without bias, on the overall condition of our environment and natural resources is the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ). It is also the one place a citizen can go with a complaint about environmental management and be sure of getting a fair hearing and helpful response. CEQ also provides policy makers with carefully researched recommendations for changes in law and regulation.

All this is done for \$174,000 per year. Rivers Alliance estimates that CEQ saves the state many times more that amount in staff time, legislators' time, consultants' fees, and litigation. **The elimination of CEQ does not make financial sense.**

**Connecticut has always valued facts, science, and the protection of natural resources. CEQ represents and implements those values.**

We in the Norwalk River Watershed have been working for over 20 years to improve the water quality and natural habit of our watershed. We have succeeded in having two sections of our river removed from the EPA list of impaired waterways, but several sections remain including the Norwalk Harbor Embayment which is home to Norwalk's shellfish industry. We are already feeling the effects of an underfunded DEEP through the recent loss of two 319 grants previously granted and through the furloughing of the Southwestern Conservation District, which helps us implement our Watershed Action Plan. We are watching two decades of work and progress be threatened. It makes financial sense to keep the momentum going through channels that are working: the CEQ, the CT DEEP, the Community Investment Act. It will cost more later to recover lost ground.

Thank you for including the testimony of the Norwalk River Watershed Association.

Sincerely,

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